



August 25, 2003

Mr. Jack Blackwell  
Regional Forester  
USFS, Pacific Southwest Region  
1323 Club Drive  
Vallejo, CA 94592

Dear Jack:

Thank you for your invitation to write you directly to explain the California Resources Agency's proposal for a direct partnership with the Forest Service to reduce the risk of fire and preserve unique wildlife habitat in the Sierra, especially in the wildland-urban intermix (WUI). Improved management is essential for the social, economic and ecological sustainability of the Sierra. As you know, we have been supportive of the direction in the January 2001 Record of Decision. We fear that the current reliance on relaxing standards and guidelines without a matching commitment by the USFS to a collaborative adaptive management (CAM) approach will hamper our collective ability to define ecologically and socially sustainable forest management in the Sierra.

To address these concerns, my staff have been working with staff from the Forest Service and U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service for several months. While staff has found agreement on the goals and objectives of CAM in the context of the wildland-urban intermix, considerable disagreement remains about the structure and function of CAM. While we believe that CAM must exist as a program, with the organization structure and management priority that that implies, Region staff appears unwilling or unable to support CAM in that manner. Our experience with California Fire Plan convinces us that an ad hoc approach to CAM will guarantee its failure. Furthermore, interest in negotiating a mutually satisfactory program to achieve the goal and objectives upon which we all apparently agree, appears, much to our chagrin, to be waning.

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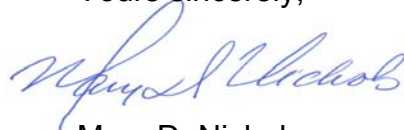


To reinvigorate this effort, we propose the following actions to be taken jointly by our agencies. The attachment includes the background and rationale for these actions.

1. Launch a state-federal Sierra Nevada Wildland Urban Intermix Program by publicly endorsing the goals and objectives developed by staff and committing to the articulation of a mutually acceptable structure for the program before the end of this fire season.
2. Direct CDF Unit Chiefs, Forest Supervisors and Fish and Game Regional Managers to identify priority areas of the WUI to be covered in this first campaign and to quantify the resources needed to develop collaboratively a five-year program of work.
3. Direct implementation funds toward the provision of all appropriate tools for project and cumulative effects analysis to the collaborative planning actions in each priority area of the WUI.
4. Direct state and federal staff to quantify the amount of funding needed to achieve the objectives in the WUI and the nature and amounts of funding potentially available from state and federal sources.
5. Request the University of California to organize scientific participation in the collaborative planning of the priority areas in order to determine the potential nature and scope of adaptive management.

We agree with the advice of independent scientists whose views were sought by the Region as part of your framework process (Drs. Walters, Balint, Stewart and Desai) that managing the Sierra Nevada is a problem beset with uncertainty and conflict. Their advice to establish an "iterative analytic-deliberative process" is sound. We offer the foregoing actions as concrete steps toward that end.

Yours sincerely,



Mary D. Nichols

Cc: Dale Bosworth, Chief USDA, Forest Service  
Mark Rey, Undersecretary, USDA  
Senator Diane Feinstein  
Senator Barbara Boxer